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A DISCUSSION OF FIRST YEAR LATIN BOOKS.

by

WILLIAM G. PALMER

THESIS

for the Degree of

BACHELOR OF ARTS,

in the College of Literature and Arts

in the

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

Presented June 1900.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

June 12th 1900.

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY

William G. Palmer

ENTITLED A Discussion of First
Year Latin Books

IS APPROVED BY ME AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF Bachelor of Arts.

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HEAD OF DEPARTMENT OF

Latin.


PRINTED 22 N 01 1,000



Before entering into the discussion of the subject proper, let us attempt a brief exposition of the different purposes for which the Latin language has been taught and studied from the time of the Middle Ages. It is quite evident that the purpose of the study will modify to a considerable degree, the manner of teaching and therefore the text-book.

During the Middle Ages in Europe, Latin was exclusively the language of diplomacy and of learning. It was the medium of intercourse between countries and was in use at all the courts. All scholars conveyed the results of their investigation and experiments through the Latin. It was the language of the Church and of polite literature. Thus we see that in those times, the ability to read, write, and speak Latin was of intense practical use to every one with the smallest pretensions to position or to learning. Naturally the object of all study of the tongue was to acquire the ability to employ it as a medium of intercourse. Hence the study consisted in the acquiring and memorizing large vocabularies, long and arduous drills in parsing words and in analyzing phrases and sentences. To become acquainted with the classic literature of the language was not even a secondary object, classic Latin was avoided and scarcely read at all, rather the later Latin writers, grammarians and rhetoricians.

With the coming of the Renaissance, however, the object of the study changed from merely facility in the use of the language, to an investigation into its literature from classic models. Latin composition based on the classics was given great importance in the teaching of the subject. Prolonged and systematic drill in the study



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of the grammar was insisted upon. The whole end and aim of the study of Latin was its value towards the discipline of the mind. This idea, known as the doctrine of "formal culture", has held full sway ever since until very recent years.

At the present time the former purpose of Latin study to acquire ability to read and speak it has dropped entirely from view. We teach Latin for its disciplinary value, for its cultural value, for the insight which it gives us into the literature and life of a great people, and especially in the secondary schools for the important training which it gives in the use of our mother tongue. Most modern text-books present the subject with these aims in view, they differ principally in the manner of its presentation. It is our object to discuss the ways in which the beginning text-books have offered the subject to the pupil, to pick out the good points, detect the faults, and in so far as possible to suggest how these faults may be remedied. The text-books which have been examined are those whose use has been general throughout the country. They are divided into two general classes, inductive and deductive, according to the system by which they present the subject. Those which belong to what is called the deductive class, although using to a greater or less extent, inductive methods to present some subjects, are by far the more numerous. Let us first take up that type of books which is classed under the inductive method. As Harper and Burgess' "Inductive Latin Primer" is the most important and the most widely used of this type, we shall examine it as representative.

The "Inductive Latin Primer" is introduced by inductive studies in English Grammar intended for those students who have never systematically studied English Grammar, and is adapted to the needs of those who intend to study Latin. The regular lesson plan is employed

in the Latin Primer is divided into six parts as follows: first a sentence of Latin is given with a literal English translation immediately beneath it. The Latin text throughout the Primer is connected and is based upon Caesar. Second, notes on the words and phrases of the text are given, explaining them and suggesting the grammatical principles illustrated. Third, under one head of "Observations" the principles illustrated in the text and suggested in the "Notes" are definitely pointed out and impressed upon the pupil. Fourth, the new words employed in the illustrative sentence are arranged alphabetically in a vocabulary. Fifth, exercises for translating English into Latin, based on the text are given, which further drill the pupil in the use of the words and phrases of the model sentence. Sixth, "Topics For Study" are suggested which take the pupil through a thorough review of what has been given in the lesson.

At frequent intervals throughout the book, review lessons are given, which go over thoroughly the matter given in the preceding lessons, with paradigms of the inflection of verbs, nouns, adjectives, etc., in so far as they have been presented in the text. These review lessons serve to keep the subject fresh in mind.

At the conclusion of the ninety-four lessons which the book contains, there are appended the text of the first twenty-nine chapters of Caesar's "Gallic Wars" with word for word and free English translations of the first ten chapters. Lists of words in common use in the first book of the Gallic Wars with a Latin-English vocabulary are also given.

By far the greater majority of texts for beginners belong to the other type of books, what we call the deductive class, not that they use deductive methods exclusively, for that would be impracticable, but that they combine the two methods in such a way as not to

give great prominence to the inductive teaching. The text-books of this description, in the main, do not differ materially, in the essentials, but show variety in the details, such as the order in which the subjects are taken up, and the arrangement of the lesson. Each author usually has his own particular hobby which he employs in his text, by giving more importance to one branch of the subject such as prose composition, or the subjunctive. We shall attempt to review but a few of those principles which have been in general use. All of the books begin with a few introductory chapters on the alphabet, pronunciation and inflection.

Lindsay & Rollins' "Easy Latin Lessons", Smiley & Stokes' "Beginners' Latin Book", Tuell & Fowler's "First Book in Latin", and Collar & Daniells' "First Latin Book", are very similar in their treatment of the subject, so we will take Collar & Daniells' text-book as a representative. After the grammatical introduction, the subject proper is opened with a discussion of the first declension which runs through several lessons, and is taken up by cases. The declensions and conjugations, together with the other subjects are alternated in the following lessons. Exercises for drill in reading alone are inserted throughout. The lesson plan of all four texts is practically as follows: paradigms and forms, illustrative sentences. Rule, vocabulary, exercises for translation from the Latin and for prose composition. The vocabulary and exercises in Tuell & Fowler and Smiley & Stokes are based on Caesar and other classical authors. At the conclusion of each text are placed paradigms of declensions, conjugations, and general English and Latin vocabularies. Tuell & Fowler and Collar and Daniell include also reading lessons of connected prose, while Smiley & Stokes, and Lindsay & Rollins give summaries of the rules of syntax.

Jones' "First Lessons in Latin" in general follows the same

treatment of the subject as those above mentioned but differs greatly, however, in one particular, in that he does not state the rules of grammar and syntax in the text, but gives references to them in seven grammars. These references are given at the beginning of each lesson for the principles which the lesson aims to present. Coys' "Latin Lessons" begins the subject with the presentation of the first verb conjugation and then alternate lessons on the declensions, conjugations and other subjects. After the first eighteen lessons on the verb and noun, each lesson is begun with a short passage from some connected Latin prose which serves as a basis for the instruction immediately following. Scudders' "First Latin Reader" is similar to Coys' in that the exercises in the lessons contain connected Latin passages as the basis for the pupils' work.

Having thus briefly reviewed the beginning Latin books in common use at the present time, we pass now to the faults found in them and to a consideration of what the practical text-book should be. It is quite evident that the method of teaching should be adapted to circumstances which at different times and in different localities may vary.

As to the value of the inductive and the so-called deductive methods, it seems that the latter type is the more practical and desirable. Pupils beginning the study of Latin in the secondary schools are usually about the age of twelve or fourteen years, an age at which the power of attention is rather small, when the slightest interruption will serve to draw the pupil's mind from his work, and when his power of fixing concentrated thought for any great length of time is well-nigh impossible for the average pupil. It is evident that to obtain the best results from this system, close attention and observation must be given. It may be stated in

defense, that to cultivate habits of close observation is one of the most important objects of language study in general, and the study of Latin in particular, but we believe that at this tender age, it is impossible to get the concentration of mind necessary for the successful use of the exclusively inductive text-books. Besides the lack of concentration, the judgment of the pupil is immature, as yet he is unable to accurately formulate general principles from a group of facts presented to him under cover of Latin sentences. With the aid of the notes accompanying the text and by the help of the teacher, he may be brought to see rules involved in the model sentences, but this defeats the purpose of the method which professes to impress the general principles upon the pupil by obliging him to dig them out for himself. It is a well known fact, that for most pupils, the beginning year in the study of Latin is the most unattractive and monotonous in the high school course, and that a successful Latin teacher is one who, together with other essential qualities is able to present the subject in an attractive manner, in such a way that the pupil takes an interest in his work. And what is more interesting to him, than to see that he is accomplishing something, that he is getting definite results from his work. But if he is obliged to direct his efforts in a way that is too advanced, and too mature for him, interest will soon fade, the study will have lost for him all attraction and the quality of work obtained will be very mediocre.

On the other hand, it is true, that a mere statement of rules and principles without leaving any room whatever for the pupil's ability to reason and perform judgments, would be quite as disastrous as in the other case. We believe that a combination of the two principles, inductive and deductive, is the desirable method for the text-book. In a book of this kind, while the pupil is encouraged

to find out things for himself, and close observation is inculcated, he is not left entirely dependent on his own resources, which at his age, are oftentimes inadequate and fruitless.

In proposing a model text-book for beginners, there should be considered first the contents of the book and the ground that should be covered during the years' work. It is very apparent to students of Latin, that the first year's work, limited as it is by short recitation periods and by the delay caused by the introduction to a new subject, can not complete the study of the grammar and syntax of the language. It is expected that grammar work shall be taken along with the translation during the remaining years of the course. The inadequacy of the time allotted in the high school to first year Latin makes it impossible to present but the essentials of the subject. The text-book should include the regular inflection of the five declensions; the regular comparison of adjectives and common irregulars, pronouns, formation and inflection of regular verbs and irregulars in common use, the principles of indirect discourse, and should aim to introduce the pupil to the origin and development of the simpler forms of the subjunctive. Rare and exceptional words and forms, unusual constructions, and the discussion of the development of the more complicated forms should be left to the higher study of the subject. The text-book should also contain sufficient material for easy reading lessons in connected prose. It is much to be preferred that the pupil should be required to own a separate book of easy Latin for that purpose, from which lessons for translation might be assigned from time to time, but as in many of the secondary schools the question of expense in the purchase of text-books plays an important part, it oftentimes happens that the single beginner's text must be made to fulfil all purposes. For this reason

it is necessary that the book contain material for practice in translation other than the regular lesson exercises. At the end of the book in the appendix, should be placed the tables of the declensions of nouns and pronouns, the regular and irregular verb conjugations, also Latin-English and English-Latin vocabularies suited to the exercises given. A good feature found in some books is a summary of the rules of syntax easily accessible to the pupil. The pupil at the end of the first year should have sufficient knowledge of the structure of the language, and a large enough vocabulary, to be able to read with facility, continuous passages of easy Latin prose.

The arrangement and order of the different subjects presented in the text-books is a field in which there is some variety among authors according to their personal preferences. Some begin with the verb inflections, others with the noun. A few attempt to complete, so far as possible, the treatment of one subject, such as verb or noun inflection etc., before beginning a new subject, but the majority of authors vary the order by presenting different subjects in alternate lessons, especially in the earlier part of the work. In a text-book published in 1867 the entire treatment of noun and adjective inflection was completed before verb conjugation was begun. The order followed in Collar & Daniell's "First Latin Book" is a natural and practical arrangement and is to be recommended. The order of work followed by several other authors is similar, differing only in slight details. The first lessons in the Collar & Daniell introduce the pupil to the first and second declensions. Verb conjugation follows in the next few lessons after which the discussion of noun, verb, adjective, pronoun, etc., is completed in alternating lessons. In the study of the verb the simple tenses in the indicative are given first, followed by the perfect tenses

after which the subject of the subjunctive, infinitive, and participles are taken up. Irregular verbs, the ablative absolute, indirect discourse are left to the latter part of the year. There is some difference in the time of taking up the subjunctive in the text-books of forty or fifty years ago. In the text-books examined, a conjugation when once begun was entirely completed, subjunctive included, before another subject was entered upon. Frequent review lessons are valuable and necessary, for they freshen the subject in the mind of the pupil and present them in a connected way, while possibly the alternate order in the treatment of the different subjects may have confused the pupil to some extent. This alternate order of the subjects in successive lessons serves more than one object. In the first place, by providing the elementary tools, it enables him to begin the work of easy translation very much earlier in the course than would have been possible otherwise. Also if the pupil were obliged to work at one thing for a considerable period without being able to experience its practical use he might weary of it. Thus the variation of the subjects in different lessons tends to renew the pupil's interest in his study, by giving him the satisfaction of seeing some results accrue from his work.

The division of the text-book into lessons and the lesson plan is an important question to be considered in the composition of the book. It is a point in which many of the editions now in use are faulty, to a greater or less degree. The greatest tendency is to make the divisions entirely too long for a single lesson, some authors acknowledge this fact in their introductions and advise the teacher not to follow the divisions in assigning work if found inconvenient but to use their own judgment in the length of the lesson. The difficulty with this method, however, is that the breaking

into the regular divisions very frequently leaves the work in a confused condition, for the lessons can not always be split up easily and abrupt stops in the middle of the subject will cause a waste of time in the next day's work, because of the necessity for reviewing what has gone before. We recognize the fact that it is practically impossible to make the lessons of such a length as will be right for all pupils, but we think that the divisions as a rule have been too long and that they might be shortened to more nearly the average pupil's capacity.

The lack of time has an important bearing on the length of lessons and also on the question of what the lesson division should contain. We believe, however, that as nearly as possible, a lesson should treat of but one subject or principle. In many cases it is impossible to carry out this rule because of the limited time which demands that we get over so much space as we can during the lesson period.

Every text-book has a definite lesson scheme by which the different parts of the lesson are arranged. Many of the text-books have lesson plans nearly similar. The following with slight variations is found in a number and seems to be the best: paradigms and forms to be learned, illustrative sentences, rule, vocabulary, exercises from and into the Latin. The tendency has been to give too much work in translation and prose composition in the lesson divisions. It is not necessary and not practical for want of time, that a great amount of this work be given but it is important that a few illustrative and representative sentences be included to give the pupil practice in the use of the principles he has learned.

In this connection it will be most profitable to discuss what should be the basis of the text for written work and trans-

lation from the Latin. On this point there has been a decided change in the recent text-books from the methods of the earlier ones. Many of the latter on the exercises for translation gave disconnected and unrelated sentences that had been manufactured merely for the purpose of illustrating the grammatical principles taught by the rule and were not classical in thought and in expression. This we believe to be a serious mistake. In our opinion it is much better that the pupil be introduced from the first to classical Latin, classical both in thought and in expression. Under such conditions the son becomes acquainted with the spirit of the classics and with the idiomatic expression of their thoughts, to a degree not possible when he has to work with unrelated sentences that convey the spirit of modern times.

As with the material for translation the vocabularies given for the pupil to commit should consist of classical words so far as possible. Related words should be grouped together as in this way they are more easily learned and remembered. The vocabularies should be presented in such a manner as to impress themselves on the memory of the beginner, for, the acquiring of a working vocabulary is one of the chief ends of the first year's work.

In the acquiring of a vocabulary the work in Latin prose composition plays an important part. It also gives one a better insight into the workings and construction of the language, by giving practical experiments in the making Latin sentences. But it should be remembered that prose composition is not an end in itself, a mistake into which many instructors have fallen in the past. It is rather an instrument by means of which, if not carried to an excess, the pupil may more readily acquire a working knowledge of the language. The work given in prose composition, like the translation, should be

based on classical prose connected with the work for translation. It should consist of the rendering of idiomatic English into idiomatic Latin, otherwise it is practically useless.

In the foregoing remarks an attempt has been made to point out some of the faults to be found in the text-books published for beginners in Latin. In so far as possible remedies for these defects have been offered and suggestions have been made which were thought appropriate for the beginner's book. In conclusion let us turn to the question, whether much scope should be left to the teacher's originality in his subject, that is, should the text-book be merely an outline for the teacher to fill out in his own way?

We can answer that it would be an ideal state of affairs if the text-book could be done away with entirely, and everything be left to the teacher. But there are at least two serious objections to this method, the lack of time, and the lack of ability on the part of the average Latin teacher. Many of the Latin instructors in our secondary schools have had but a very inferior preparation for their work, and depend upon the text-book, hence we think that the latter should contain enough material for the year's work and should not leave the pupil too much to the mercy of an inferior instructor. In any case the able teacher will display his originality in his method of presenting his subject and will not let himself be confined to the text-book, while if the latter is full and sufficient, the inferior teacher will be able at least to give his pupils a good preparation for higher work in the study of Latin.





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